

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 SY-05 MCT-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00
PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01
SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11 ACDA-12 COME-00 OMB-01 TRSE-00
AID-05 HA-05 /105 W
-----068017 100740Z /15

R 091102Z APR 78
FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6636
INFO AMEMBASSY ANKARA
AMEMBASSY COLOMBO
AMEMBASSY DACCA
AMEMBASSY KABUL
AMCONSUL KARACHI
AMCONSUL LAHORE
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L ISLAMABAD 3457

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

3.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, PK
SUBJECT: SABOTAGE PLOT ALLEGED

1. SUMMARY: PAKISTAN POLICE HAVE DISCOVERED AN ALLEGED "SABOTAGE PLOT" AND ARRESTED 15 MEMBERS OF THE PAKISTAN PEOPLE'S PARTY (PPP). THE PLOT MAY OR MAY NOT BE REAL, BUT THE REVELATIONS COULD HAVE AN IMPORTANT EFFECT ON THE POSSIBILITY OF ELECTIONS, ON THE FORMATION OF AN INTERIM NATIONAL GOVERNMENT, AND ON THE FUTURE OF THE PPP. END SUMMARY.

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2. DRAMATIC FRONT PAGE STORIES IN PAKISTAN PRESS APRIL 8 AND 9 ANNOUNCE THE "DISCOVERY" OF A PAKISTAN PEOPLE'S PARTY (PPP) "SABOTAGE PLOT" TO BLOW UP THE LAHORE HIGH COURT AND COMMIT OTHER "TERRORIST" ACTS THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY. THE SABOTAGE CAMPAIGN WAS SAID TO HAVE BEEN DIRECTED BY A "SUBVERSIVE GROUP" COMPOSED OF LEFT-WING PPP MEMBERS. STORY BEGAN TO UNFOLD ON 6 APRIL, WHEN THE LAHORE POLICE ARRESTED THREE MEN, AMONG THEM A

SUB-EDITOR OF THE PPP NEWSPAPER MUSAWAAT, WHO WERE IN POSSESSION OF 90 "PLASTIC BOMBS", AS WELL AS HAND GRENADES AND DETONATORS. A DOZEN MORE PEOPLE WERE LATER ARRESTED, INCLUDING FORMER FEDERAL MINISTER AND A LEADER OF THE "LEFT WING" OF THE PPP, SHEIKH MOHAMMED RASHID, FORMER PUNJAB MINISTER MUKHTAR AWAN, AND SOME UNNAMED FORMER NATIONAL ASSEMBLY MEMBERS.

3. THE POLICE REPORTED THAT THE SABOATGE GROUP WAS UNDER THE DIRECTION OF RASHID AND FORMER PROVINCIAL ASSEMBLY MEMBER KAUSAR ALI SHAH. THE GROUP WAS SAID TO HAVE THREE WINGS - PLANNING, OPERATIONS, AND FINANCE - THE LATTER BASED IN LONDON AND USING SECRET FUNDS FROM PPP ACCOUNTS IN LONDON AND SWITZERLAND. THE EXPLOSIVES WERE SAID TO BE OF FOREIGN ORIGIN, SIMILAR TO THOSE PREVIOUSLY DISCOVERED THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY WHEN BHUTTO WAS IN POWER AND TO THOSE USED IN A 1974 EXPLOSION IN THE WAPDA BUILDING -- AT THE TIME BLAMED ON THE NATIONAL AWAMI PARTY. THE IMPLICATION IS LEFT THAT THE WAPDA EXPLOSION WAS A PPP ACT DESIGNED TO DISCREDIT THE NAP.

4. MAULANA KAUSAR NIAZI, LEADER OF THE RUMP "LIBERAL" WING OF THE PPP, HAS TWICE TOLD INTERVIEWERS THAT HE HAD BEEN ASKED BY BEGUM NUSRAT BHUTTO SEVERAL MONTHS AGO TO SUPPORT A CAMPAIGN OF SABOTAGE BUT HAD REFUSED. HE BLAMED THE ACTIVITIES ON "COMMUNIST AND ANARCHIST" ELEMENTS IN THE PPP AND STATED THAT THEY HAD DIMINISHED THE CHANCES FOR ELECTIONS IN THE NEAR FUTURE. SUCH A SITUATION, HE SAID, WOULD MAKE THE FORMATION OF AN INTERIM CONFIDENTIAL

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NATIONAL GOVERNMENT A "WISE STEP".

5. COMMENT: PAKISTAN HAS A CHECKERED HISTORY OF UNCOVERING "CONSPIRACIES" AT TIMES OF DOMESTIC STRESS. WHETHER OR NOT THERE IS ANY TRUTH TO (OR CONNECTION BETWEEN) THESE LATEST REVELATIONS, SOME IN THE MARTIAL LAW ADMINISTRATION WOULD SEE THE FOLLOWING ADVANTAGES:

--PRESSURE IS PUT ON PPP MEMBERS TO ASSOCIATE THEMSELVES FORMALLY WITH THE "LIBERAL WING" LED BY KAUSAR NIAZI, WHICH IS REPORTEDLY AMENABLE TO PARTICIPATION IN A NATIONAL GOVERNMENT, IN ORDER TO DISSOCIATE THEMSELVES FROM THE SABOTAGE PLOT (AND FROM BEGUM BHUTTO);

--NIAZI'S REVELATIONS LEAVE THE BEGUM OPEN TO FORMAL CHARGES;

--THEY ALSO ALLOW THE MLA TO CRACK DOWN EVEN FURTHER ON THE LAW AND ORDER SITUATION AND TO CLAIM THAT DISRUPTIONS AND DEMONSTRATIONS IN THE COUNTRY ARE NOT THE PRODUCT OF GENUINE PUBLIC DISCONTENT, BUT RATHER ARE THE WORK OF "COMMUNISTS AND ANARCHISTS", WHO WISH TO DESTROY PAKISTAN;

--IF ELECTIONS ARE TO BE FURTHER DELAYED, THE SABOTAGE PLOT OFFERS THE GOVERNMENT AN ADDITIONAL EXCUSE - A POSSIBILITY ALREADY SIGNALLED BY NIAZI.

6. WE EXPECT THE GOVERNMENT TO MOVE AHEAD EXPEDITIOUSLY WITH THE CASE. THE POLICE HAVE PROMISED A "COMPLETE INVESTIGATION" AND MORE ARRESTS WITHIN 2 TO 3 DAYS. THE ALREADY CHARGED POLITICAL ATMOSPHERE IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE BHUTTO VERDICT AND THE "NATIONAL GOVERNMENT" MOVEMENT HAS BEEN HEIGHTENED, AND FORMAL CHARGES AGAINST BEGUM BHUTTO SEEM LIKELY.

7. IN REFRESHING CONTRAST TO PAST CHARGES OF FOREIGN CONSPIRACIES, A WHISPERING CAMPAIGN HAS STARTED WHICH ALLEGES SOVIET INVOLVEMENT IN SUPPLYING MONEY AND EXPLOSIVES TO THE CONFIDENTIAL

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PLOTTERS; NIAZI'S STATEMENTS ABOUT "COMMUNISTS" SEEM INTENDED TO FUEL SUCH SPECULATION.
HUMMEL

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: SABOTAGE, PLOTS, POLITICAL PARTIES, POLITICAL SITUATION, ELECTIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 09 apr 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978ISLAMA03457
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: DG ALTERED
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780153-0964
Format: TEL
From: ISLAMABAD
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780477/aaaacnbc.tel
Line Count: 139
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 23a5aab3-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 09 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3027125
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: SABOTAGE PLOT ALLEGED
TAGS: PINT, PK
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/23a5aab3-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014